

Launch Of "Map Guide To Appalachia" Initiative Will Promote Tourism In Southwest Virginia (March 15, 2005)

Launch of New Website and Distribution of Map Insert Will Promote Tourism Growth in Region

(Washington, D.C.) - U.S. Representative Rick Boucher announced today that the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), in partnership with National Geographic magazine, has launched the "Map Guide to Appalachia" initiative to promote tourism in Southwest Virginia and all of the Appalachian region. As part of the initiative, a new website is being launched and a special map will be inserted into the April 2005 issue of National Geographic Traveler magazine which showcases 30 tourism sites in Southwest Virginia.

"The launch of the National Geographic Map Guide to Appalachia will be tremendously beneficial to our region by showcasing the unique natural, cultural and historical heritage of Southwest Virginia. The thirty sites from Southwest Virginia which will be featured as part of the Map Guide to Appalachia initiative have tremendous potential to enhance the tourism economy of our region, and the large national exposure which this new initiative will bring will serve to benefit the economic development of our region," Boucher said.

More than thirty sites from Southwest Virginia have been specially chosen by the ARC and National Geographic magazine to be showcased in the Map Guide to Appalachia. Those thirty sites are:

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Blue Ridge Parkway

Breaks Interstate Park

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail

Alleghany Highlands Arts and Crafts Center, Clifton Forge

Barr's Fiddle Shop, Galax

Barter Theater, Abingdon

Burke's Garden

Carter Family Memorial Music Center, Hiltons

Eagles Nest Restaurant, Floyd

Firmstone Manor, Clifton Forge

Floyd Country Store

Galax Old Fiddlers Convention, Galax

Historic Crab Orchard Museum, Tazewell

Humpback Bridge, Covington

Jacksonville Center, Floyd

Mabry Mill, Meadows of Dan

Martha Washington Inn, Abingdon

Ralph Stanley Museum and Traditional Music Center, Clintwood

Roaring Run Furnace, New Castle

Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park, Big Stone Gap

Blue Ridge Music Center, Fisher's Peak

Town of Paint Bank

Town of Pocahontas and Pocahontas Exhibition Coal Mine and Museum

Trail of the Lonesome Pine Outdoor Drama, Big Stone Gap

Virginia Creeper Trail, Abingdon

The Crooked Road

Virginia Highlands Festival, Abingdon

Wayne C. Henderson Festival, Mouth of Wilson

Wolf Creek Indian Village and Museum, Bastian

Each of the sites from Southwest Virginia which have been included in the Map Guide to Appalachia will be marked on the map insert which will be included in the April 2005 issue of Traveler magazine. In addition, they will be featured on the new website which was launched today by National Geographic. The new website -- nationalgeographic.com/appalachia -- boasts an interactive map which will enable visitors to plan their trip from any location in the world to one of the sites in Southwest Virginia. In addition, visitors to the website will have the opportunity to link directly with many of the location websites which are featured in the map insert.

Boucher noted that the map insert in National Geographic's Traveler magazine and the new website will reach millions of potential new visitors to Southwest Virginia. "It is expected that five to seven million people will visit the new website each month, and the feature article in National Geographic's Traveler magazine will reach more than four million people across the United States. With this large exposure, Southwest Virginia stands to benefit from the many new tourists who will want to experience all that our region has to offer," he added.

The total cost of the Map Guide to Appalachia initiative was \$385,000. Of that total amount, \$185,000 in federal ARC funds were used for the project. The thirteen states which are members of the ARC provided the balance of the necessary funding.